



***George Washington & Jefferson National Forests***  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Illegal ATV User Found Guilty of Damaging Forest Service Land**

**Abingdon, Va.** – The Western District Federal Court of Virginia recently found John Hayes of Falls Mills, Virginia guilty of damaging natural resources and hunting over bait on the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. Hayes was fined \$370 and ordered to pay an additional \$500 for damages resulting from creating and maintaining a trail in the Kimberling Creek Wilderness in Bland County. Hayes was baiting bears and created this illegal trail to access his tree-stand and feeder.

The U.S. Forest Service will continue issuing hefty fines to individuals who misuse public lands. The trail created by Hayes damaged over one-half-mile of Congressionally designated wilderness, and will cost nearly \$3000 to rehabilitate. Future violators could face steeper fines for similar offenses. According to a 2012 estimate, the cost of rehabilitating an illegal trail in the wilderness is \$1 per foot because repair work can only be conducted by hand.

The George Washington and Jefferson National Forests are home to 23 designated wilderness areas totaling nearly 140,000 acres. Wilderness is managed to provide a primitive, natural recreation setting absent of human influence. Infrastructure such as roads and power lines do not exist, and common land management techniques such as timber harvest are not utilized. In addition to primitive settings, Wilderness is valuable for its scientific and educational uses, as a benchmark for ecological studies, and for the preservation of historical and natural features.

Since Wilderness is managed as a primitive experience, no form of mechanized or motorized equipment, such as chainsaws or ATV's, is allowed. "ATV's are only allowed on designated ATV Trails," explains Eastern Divide District Ranger Cindy Schiffer. "All other ATV use is strictly prohibited on the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. We are particularly diligent with monitoring areas near wilderness." For information on Forest Service ATV Trails, or to report illegal ATV use, contact the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests at (540) 265-5100.

**-USDA-**

*The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.*